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Hubert Butler, *Balkan Essays*. Foreword by Chris Agee. Afterwords by Joseph Brodsky (1994) and Vuk Perišić (2016). Edited by Chris and Jacob Agee. Belfast: The Irish Pages Press, 2016. ISBN: 978-09935532-0-2, 573 pp. (Croatian edition: *Balkanski eseji*, Zaprešić: Fraktura, 2016, translated by Hana and Srdjan Dvornik, ISBN: 978-953266792-9, 512 pp.)

‘The Yugo-Slavs are, on the whole, proud of their desperate isolation. The world, they say, is divided into East, West and Yugo-Slavia’, Hubert Butler wrote in 1951, following a visit to the country he came to know well before the war.¹ Yugoslavia had barely begun to recover from a brutal four-year Axis occupation, a violent and complex ‘domestic’ ideological and ethnic civil war, and a communist takeover, when a political conflict with the Soviet Union escalated in 1948. Tensions were high and for a while the possibility of a Soviet-led invasion seemed real. Butler travelled as a member of a delegation sent by the National Peace Council – an organisation chaired by John Boyd Orr, the 1949 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize – to investigate Moscow’s claims about Belgrade’s preparations for war and the building of Anglo-American military bases inside Tito’s federation.

Originally serialised in *The Irish Times* in 1951, ‘In Europe’s Debatable Lands’, Butler’s ‘report’ from Yugoslavia, was first published as a whole piece only in 2002.² It reappears in *Balkan Essays*, a hugely important book of contemporary

¹ Hubert Butler, ‘In Europe’s Debatable Lands (1951)’, 411-442, 411. All Butler’s essays cited in the text have been published in *Balkan Essays*. This review article is based on a talk presented at a panel discussion dedicated to Hubert Butler (co-panellists Roy Foster and Vesna Goldsworthy), Centre for the Study of the Balkans, Goldsmiths, University of London, 1 December 2017.

² *Irish Pages*, 1:1, Inaugural Issue: Belfast in Europe (Spring, 2002), 144-168.

relevance which brings together everything Butler wrote about Yugoslavia, some of it previously unpublished. The essays have been compiled and edited by Chris and Jacob Agee, and, unusually perhaps, the English and Croatian editions came out in the same year (2016).

Born into an Anglo-Irish family in County Kilkenny, Ireland, and originally drawn to Russian literature, Butler won in the mid-1930s a scholarship from University of London's School of Slavonic Studies to travel to Yugoslavia. He stayed for three years, learned Serbo-Croat – while teaching English in Zagreb – and travelled across the country, sometimes together with his young family, fascinated by the Yugoslavs and their culture and history.

Identities forged at a periphery of, and in opposition to, empires, ethno-religious divisions, stereotypical lands of perennial sectarian violence, mentalities shaped by a mix of (often self-perceived) heroism and victimhood... all this must have reminded Butler of his native land. Yugoslavia also appealed because 'it attained its independence at the same time as we did in Ireland and had to confront similar problems of diverse religions, culture, loyalties'.³ 'In Belgrade I had found my west-in-east', wrote another Irishman, Nobel Prize-winning poet Seamus Heaney, in 1999, and the same perhaps might be said of Butler's sentiment towards interwar Yugoslavia.⁴

Of Sarajevo – the place where Gavrilo Princip shot archduke Franz Ferdinand and duchess Sophie on 28 June 1914 (incidentally, the day which in 1948 Stalin chose to expel Yugoslavia from the Cominform) – Butler would write how the ideology of commemoration depended on which regime was in control. One person deserving of a monument, but forgotten by nearly everyone, was Leo Pfeffer, Princip's Austrian-born American Jewish lawyer. Pfeffer was an honourable man, driven by professional ethics and strong liberal values, which, according to Butler, were a major victim of the Great War.⁵

It was perhaps out of a sense of moral obligation and humanity similar to Pfeffer's that after his stay in Yugoslavia Butler travelled to Vienna in 1938, at his own expense, to help Central European Jews fleeing the Nazis. His Irish patriotism was embedded in values apparently alien to some members of Ireland's political establishment. Responding to those in Ireland opposed to the entry of Jewish refugees (unless they were Christian converts) he wrote: 'I was as Irish as Oliver J. Flanagan [a notoriously anti-Semitic Irish politician] and I was determined that Jewish refugees should come to Ireland'. Together with his wife Peggy Guthrey, Butler secured

³ Chris Agee, 'Foreword: A Rare Tolerance of Disagreeable Truths', in: *Balkan Essays*, 13-42, 28.

⁴ Seamus Heaney, 'Known World', *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 May 1999.

⁵ Hubert Butler, 'Mr Pfeffer of Sarajevo (1956)', 57-70.

exit visas for a dozen Vienna Jews and helped them continue their journey to the Americas when the Irish authorities refused to grant them leave to remain.⁶

Butler first arrived in Yugoslavia in October 1934, just as the news of the assassination of king Aleksandar and Louis Barthou arrived from Marseille. The assassin may have been a Macedonian revolutionary, but the murder was masterminded by Croatian Ustašas – and funded by Mussolini's Italy. Butler must have quickly understood the significance of the event, but even an observer as shrewd as he was could not have known that Ustaša terror and its legacy would become one of his principal subjects of enquiry.

Contrary to predictions of those behind the assassination, Yugoslavia did not disintegrate. Temporarily at least, the country seemed more united than ever since 1 December 1918, when prince regent Aleksandar of Serbia (and the future unfortunate king of Yugoslavia), proclaimed the Yugoslav unification in Belgrade. The act of union was read in front of members of Zagreb's National Council, a de facto government of Habsburg South Slavs, who had declared independence from Budapest and Vienna and whose representatives travelled to Belgrade to demand unification with Serbia (which had just merged with Montenegro).

Whether the shots fired in Marseille were the first shots of the Second World War, as some have claimed, or not, the assassinations caused a serious international crisis. In an effort to appease Mussolini, the League of Nations preferred to place the blame on Hungary, a smaller revisionist power also implicated in the Balkan terrorist activities. Ustaša leaders were sentenced in absentia, but most remained out of reach of the Yugoslav authorities. The Yugoslav army had not yet capitulated when the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), which included the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina and stretched deep into north-western Serbia, was proclaimed in Zagreb by the Ustašas, installed in power by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy (and given endorsement by the Catholic Church in Croatia). Soon afterwards, the new regime started a campaign of mass murder, ethnic cleansing and forced conversion of Serb, Jewish and Roma minorities.

The event in Marseille drew another Anglo-Irish author to Yugoslavia. Rebecca West's classic travel book *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* opens with her recollection of the day the news from France reached Britain.⁷ West recalls how she felt an urge to visit Yugoslavia even though, by her own admission, she had never spoken

⁶ Fintan O'Toole, 'Culture Shock: In Saving Jews from the Nazis, Hubert Butler Saved Ireland from Shame', *The Irish Times*, 24 January 2015.

⁷ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: The Record of a Journey through Yugoslavia in 1937*, London: Macmillan, 1941, Prologue. The book also includes a lengthy section on the Sarajevo assassination, 337-393.

the name of the country prior to then; all she knew was that it was in the Balkans and the Balkans were violent. Butler and West briefly crossed paths in 1937, when they took a car trip to Dubrovnik.⁸ A student-traveller fluent in Serbo-Croat and an internationally-known feminist writer and critic, previously unfamiliar with the region, but accompanied by her banker husband and well-connected Yugoslavs, seemingly had little in common, apart from their Anglo-Irish background.

Yet, Yugoslavia would leave a deep imprint on both. *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* occupies a central place in West's rich body of work. The book was published in 1941, instantly becoming an account of a vanished world, destroyed by the Axis invasion and occupation. West's masterpiece was unavailable in postwar Yugoslavia because of the writer's sympathies for and support of general Mihailović and the Yugoslav king- and government-in-exile – hardly a recommendation for state-controlled publishers inside Tito's socialist federation. It was re-discovered in the 1990s, as Yugoslavia descended into another civil war (and it was sometimes misread in the new, post-Yugoslav context).

Butler's essays range, as Roy Foster observed, from 'travel, literature, philosophy, autobiography or (characteristically) move easily through all four inside a dozen pages'.⁹ I would add *history*, *politics* and *ethnography*. Butler's Yugoslav work is comparable to West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, except that it was published in pieces and almost randomly over several decades, which is probably why it remains little known, even among Yugoslav specialists.¹⁰

The essays include a fascinating ethnographic account on reconciliation among Montenegrin clans engaged in an old local custom of blood feud; and a piece on, broadly speaking, complex relationship between intellectuals and politics, based on the diaries of Vladimir Nazor, a Croatian poet who joined Tito's Partisans in 1942, aged 66.¹¹

Butler's work concerning massacres and forced conversion into Catholicism of Orthodox Serbs by the Ustaša regime would have the greatest impact. (Between

⁸ Aidan O'Malley, 'Hubert Butler "In Europe's Debatable Lands"', in: A. O'Malley & Eve Patten (eds), *Ireland, West to East: Irish Cultural Connections with Central and Eastern Europe*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014, 179-194, 179.

⁹ Roy Foster, 'Introduction', in: Hubert Butler, *The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue, and Other Essays*, edited by Roy Foster, London: Allen Lane, 1990, ix-xvi, xiii.

¹⁰ An exception was British journalist Richard West (no relation to Rebecca), who first travelled to Yugoslavia in the early 1950s, in the aftermath of the Stepinac trial and on the eve of the 40th anniversary of Sarajevo. Richard West, *Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia*, London: Faber & Faber, 1994, see Foreword.

¹¹ Hubert Butler, 'The Last Izmerenje [sic] (1947)' and 'Nazor, Oroschatz and the Von Berks (1947)', 77-102 (also reproduced in *The Sub-Prefect*, 304-312 and 226-236, respectively).

200,000 and 250,000 Serbs were converted, around 330,000 killed – 50,000 at the Jasenovac concentration camp alone – and some 200,000 expelled; around 30,000 Jews and 25,000 Roma from the NDH also died in the Independent State of Croatia or in Nazi camps.)¹² The conduct of the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia and the role of Alojzije Stepinac, the controversial archbishop of Zagreb, was the central theme of Butler's Yugoslav work. It also proved to be an especially sensitive topic because of the timing (communist takeovers, the Cold War) and the place (Ireland) of publication.

Butler returned to Yugoslavia after the war to follow the trial of Stepinac, who had initially supported the Ustaša regime of Ante Pavelić, before trying to distance himself from the Ustašas when the extent of their crimes became obvious. The archbishop was able to save some Jews and Serbs, and established contact with the British and the Yugoslav government-in-exile through Stanislav Rapotec (a Trieste-born Slovene who served as a Yugoslav army officer and who would become one of Australia's best-known abstract painters).¹³ Yet, Stepinac never publicly denounced the wartime Zagreb government. It is almost certain that he would not have been brought to trial if he had been prepared to accommodate Tito in the way he was willing to collaborate with Pavelić.¹⁴

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Irish public followed with deep concern, and sometimes with little background knowledge and understanding of the context, the fate of Catholic clergy in Eastern Europe, where 'people's democracies' were taking over in what seemed to be a second Bolshevik Revolution. For many in Ireland, a Catholic prelate such as Stepinac was nothing but a martyr, a victim of communist terror, reminiscent of Catholic victims of the Protestant rule in their own country.

¹² Figures based on the works by Bogoljub Kočović, *Žrtve drugog svetskog rata u Jugoslaviji*, London: Veritas Foundation Press, 1985; Vladimir Žerjavić, *Gubici stanovništva Jugoslavije u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, Zagreb: Jugoslavensko viktimoško društvo, 1989, and Ivo and Slavko Goldstein, *Holokaust u Zagrebu*, Zagreb: Liber, 2001. See also *Balkan Essays*, 178n.

¹³ Stevan K. Pavlowitch, 'Reserve Infantry Lieutenant Rapotec: His Missions to and from Occupied Yugoslavia', in: Pavlowitch, *Unconventional Perceptions of Yugoslavia, 1940-1945*, Boulder, Co: East European Monographs/New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, 67-105. See also Stevan Pavlowitch, 'Obituary: Stanislaus Rapotec', *The Independent*, 9 December 1997.

¹⁴ For Stepinac, and more generally for religious institutions in socialist Yugoslavia, see Stella Alexander, *The Triple Myth: A Life of Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac*, Boulder, Co: East European Monographs/New York: Columbia University Press, 1987; Klaus Buchenau, *Orthodoxie und Katholizismus in Jugoslawien 1945-1991: Ein serbisch-kroatischer Vergleich*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004; and Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Typically, Butler researched his topic meticulously. He worked in Zagreb's libraries and archives and spoke with eyewitnesses; he even managed to visit Stepinac in prison, and ultimately portrayed him as a complex character. (Young Stepinac, incidentally, had served in the Habsburg army in the First World War, survived Italian captivity and joined the Serbian and Habsburg Yugoslav troops at the Salonika front in the final stages of the war.) During his research, Butler discovered letters Stepinac and other Croatian prelates sent to Pavelić, which provide evidence that the forced conversions took place. And yet, because they were 'not helpful either for the Communist prosecution or the catholic defence', neither side was particularly keen to publicise the letters.¹⁵

Stepinac expressed regret concerning conversions, complaining about their violent and disorderly nature, not about the actual idea. 'Conversion would be appropriate and easy. Unfortunately the authorities by their narrow views are involuntarily hindering the Croatian and Catholic cause', Stepinac wrote to Pavelić on 20 November 1941. He cited the bishop of Mostar, who believed the Orthodox would be more willing to convert if treated less violently.¹⁶ The mass murder and forced conversions of the Serbs were known at the Vatican (which during the war maintained diplomatic relations with the London-based Yugoslav government-in-exile). Yet, the Vatican remained silent, with some notable exceptions, such as Cardinal Tisserant, a member of the Curia, 'who had a rare tolerance of disagreeable truths'.¹⁷

'Why was the [Church] hierarchy so utterly impotent to check this inroad of fanatical barbarians into the purely ecclesiastical domain of conversion?', asked Butler, before answering:

Pity for the heretic had always to be qualified, and was sometimes neutralised by zeal for the extension of the Catholic Church. Never once did they say, 'Let there be an end to conversions! There can be no talk of free will and voluntary change of faith in a land invaded by two armies and ravaged by civil war!' Their concern is all for the right ordering of things, the appointment of suitable missionaries, and a recognition of the legitimate claim of the Greek [sic] Catholic Church, equally with the Roman Catholics, to make converts from the Orthodox. A great opportunity had come to them. They must use it wisely, and not barbarously, for the saving of souls, but use it they must.¹⁸

¹⁵ Hubert Butler, 'The Compulsory Conversion Campaign of 1941: I-III (1950-51)', 177-198, 177-178.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 182-183.

¹⁷ Hubert Butler, 'The Artukovich File (1970, 1985)', 249-275, 259 (also: *The Sub-Prefect*, 283-303, 290).

¹⁸ Butler, 'The Compulsory Conversion Campaign of 1941: I-III', 178-179.

I would add that Stepinac's letters reveal another explanation for the Church's support of the regime: a shared interpretation of Croatia's recent past, built around an exaggerated portrayal of anti-Croatian, pro-Serbian nature of the Yugoslav kingdom. In 1941, *Communism* joined *Yugoslavia* as the Croats' main enemy. In the letter cited above, Stepinac wrote:

Here we speak only of the mistakes which have prevented the conversion of the Orthodox from proceeding with that widespread success which it would otherwise have had. [...] We know that these acts were the reaction to the [Yugoslav] State policy of the last twenty years in particular and to the crimes of the Chetniks and the Communists, who committed so many bloody deeds on our peaceful Croatian people.¹⁹

While the Serbs' political domination (especially by Serbs from the pre-Yugoslav Serbian kingdom) during the 1920s and 1930s is beyond doubt, it would be hard to justify such claims in the spheres of culture and even economy. Stepinac's interpretation, shared by the Ustašas, also failed to take into account the Croats' (including his own) contribution to the creation of Yugoslavia, a strong Serb opposition to the dictatorship of king Aleksandar, and continuous attempts throughout the period to reach a Serb-Croat compromise. These led, in 1939, to the creation of autonomous Croatia, the only territory to enjoy such position in the interwar kingdom. It was a state within a state, and as centralised as pre-1939 Yugoslavia; for example, no autonomy for a large number of Serbs and Muslims living in the Croatian province would be allowed.²⁰

Butler did not idealise interwar successor states (Yugoslavia and his own Ireland including), but interpreted them in the context of their time: 'In the twenties, the small self-governing state, forging anew its cultural identity, had seemed the only answer to imperialism, Communism and international capitalism, yet hardly any small people were ready to grant to others the liberty they claimed for themselves'.²¹ In any case, however badly the predominantly Serb elites may have mismanaged the interwar Yugoslav state, that could and should not have been used

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 181. Elsewhere, Stepinac refers to Communists and Četniks acting to prevent forced conversion of Serbs in Banja Luka. *Ibid.*, 179. A joint Četnik-Communist Partisan resistance against the Axis and their domestic collaborators went on until the late 1941, before the two sides would turn against each other, contributing significantly to an already multi-layered and violent conflict in occupied Yugoslavia.

²⁰ See Dejan Djokić, *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia*, London and New York: Hurst/Columbia University Press, 2007; or the Serbian edition, *Nedostižni kompromis*, published in 2010 by Fabrika knjiga.

²¹ Hubert Butler, 'Rebecca West in Yugoslavia (1977)', 489-492, 490.

as an explanation, let alone justification, for the Ustaša terror, as Butler implicitly states in several essays.

He had little sympathy for Stepinac: 'I would think it unkind and unchivalrous to belittle the courage and endurance of anyone who suffers for an ideal, if it was not well known that Mgr Stepinac's martyrdom had been deliberately courted and that his opponents [Tito's government] offered him his freedom if he left the country, and only imprisoned him with reluctance and embarrassment'. The real martyrs, in Butler's view, were innocent Yugoslavs, many of them children, victims of crimes committed during the war by groups such as the Ustašas. 'As for Mgr Stepinac, I believe he underwent martyrdom in order that the truth should be misrepresented.'²² It might be worth pointing out that Butler was not a communist sympathiser, but a liberal and a Christian.

Criticism of Butler by parts of the Irish Catholic opinion, unable or unwilling to accept his claims about the role of the Church in wartime Croatia, was matched by silence in Croatia. Butler's investigation was initially met with a mix of suspicion and surprise, but he was eventually given full access to the files. He believed this was because the Croatian – and Yugoslav – society was ready to move on, having overcome, temporarily at least, 'the natural desire of every nation to conceal its weaknesses from itself, or in the smooth phraseology of self-deception, to "let the bygones be bygones"'. He also noted that incriminating documents about the wartime Croatian government and the Catholic Church were already being published, and compared this favourably with how France and Britain dealt with their own experiences of occupation.²³ The following words, published in 1951, and which may have referred to Yugoslavia, Ireland, Britain or France in equal measure, remain relevant today: 'The public does not want a truthful account of occupation. It prefers to switch over extremes of reprobation to extremes of condonation.'²⁴

In 1998 pope John Paul II proclaimed Stepinac a martyr and beatified him in front of half a million Croats gathered to witness the ceremony held near Zagreb; Serbian, Jewish and anti-clerical Croat protests were largely ignored. Stepinac would have been almost certainly already canonised had pope Francis not hesitated, insisting that a dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia and the Serbian Orthodox Church must precede any decision on Stepinac's sainthood.

As mentioned above, it was only in 2016 that Butler's work finally appeared in Croatian translation. This, I suspect, has something to do with liberal-left circles in

²² Hubert Butler, 'Ireland and Croatia (1948, 1988)', 217-226, 219-220.

²³ Hubert Butler, 'The Invader Wore Slippers (1950)', 205-216, 206-207 (also: *The Sub-Prefect*, 251-260, 252-253). Re. Britain: Butler referred to the Channel Islands.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 207-208 (also: *The Sub-Prefect*, 253).

Croatia opposed to the canonisation of the wartime archbishop. It is ironic, but also somehow appropriate, that Butler should be introduced to Croatian audiences at the time when Stepinac's record under the Ustaša regime is finally being publically debated. Butler would have, undoubtedly, recognised echoes of the Irish conservative Catholic, pro-Stepinac opinion in today's Croatia, although he would have been pleased with liberal voices against the archbishop's canonisation, which include, I think, the editors and publishers of *Balkan Essays/Balkanski eseji*.

While Stepinac was being tried, Andrija Artuković, Pavelić's interior minister, lived in Dublin in 1947-1948, under a false identity. In another key essay, Butler investigates the Roman Catholic network which helped Artuković first hide with his family in Ireland for a whole year, before emigrating to the United States. A 'desk murderer', often annoyed by disorderly implementation of his instructions, Artuković was known as 'Croatia's Himmler'. His Dublin landlady refused to believe Butler when he explained who her former tenant really was. He was a family man, a good father and husband, she insisted. 'He was respectable', Butler wrote only months before the US finally extradited Artuković to Yugoslavia in February 1986, 'and it is the correlation of respectability and crime that nowadays has to be so carefully investigated.'²⁵

When he returned to Yugoslavia in 1950, Butler knew the Soviet allegations were groundless even before the mission did its work. He had no illusions the Cominform would pay much attention to the mission's findings (although he hoped an impression might be made on British Communists).²⁶ His report provides an invaluable insight into the Yugoslav society after the Tito-Stalin split, but before the final divorce from Stalinism, Yugoslavia yet to pursue its own, Titoist, form of socialism. Socialism which at one point seemed to offer a successful model for a multicultural society based on ethnic and social equality. Butler died just before Yugoslavia, in January 1991, aged almost 91, but could he have predicted another brutal war among the South Slavs?

The title of the 1951 essay – 'In Europe's Debatable Lands' – is intriguing. Half a century earlier, William Miller argued in *Travel and Politics in the Near East* that only a Great Power, 'impartial in its treatment of conflicting races and creeds' is 'qualified to govern those debatable lands, like Macedonia, where national unity is impossible'.²⁷ Despite references to wartime Croat massacres of Serbs, Butler's text paints not a country hopelessly divided, but rather united behind Tito, and

²⁵ Butler, 'The Artukovich File (1970, 1985)', 249-275, 266-267 (also: *The Sub-Prefect*, 283-303, 296).

²⁶ Butler, 'In Europe's Debatable Lands', 411.

²⁷ New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co. Publishers, 1898, 503.

notes early signs of the relaxation of a dictatorship previously modelled on Stalinism.

Nor did Butler think that Yugoslavia should become a client of a Great Power, Eastern or Western. 'The longer they can keep their independence uncompromised the better it will be for everyone', he wrote, before adding that '[a]t the worst they can now offer a forum where capitalist and Communist can meet without constraint or hostile intentions'. This was written a decade before the inauguration of the Non-aligned Movement in Belgrade, a 'third block' led by Yugoslavia, India, Indonesia, Egypt and Ghana, which aimed to mediate between the capitalist West and communist East.

The essay title may have alluded to Yugoslavia's unique international position after 1948, but it may have been also a subtle reference to the Irish and British 'debatable lands', where ethnicity and religion similarly threatened political stability.²⁸

As the centenary of the creation of Yugoslavia approaches, the ongoing controversy over the wartime record of Stepinac and the Catholic Church, the tragic legacy of the Ustaša regime and more broadly the nature of collaboration and resistance in occupied Yugoslavia, which await a genuine scholarly and public debate, make Butler as relevant as ever. The readers of this collection will feel a deep sense of gratitude to Chris and Jacob Agee for compiling and editing the book. Beautifully written, Butler's Balkan essays represent a highly exciting, thought-provoking and sometimes disturbing read, that is at once historical and topical.²⁹

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²⁸ Anglo-Scottish border regions are sometimes referred to as 'debatable lands'. O'Malley, 'Hubert Butler', 182-183.

²⁹ That Hubert Butler seems to be finally drawing a richly deserved attention, not just in Croatia, we must also thank, I think above anyone else, Professor Roy Foster, Butler's intellectual heir, who introduced me to Butler three and a half years ago.